

MINUTES

**Third Quarterly Meeting of the
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION
Held, pursuant to notice
Wednesday, August 4, 2004 — 10:00 AM
Mt. Vernon Veterans Home, 1600 S Hickory,
Mt. Vernon, MO**

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call
In attendance: **Chairman Emmett Fairfax, Member Carl Niewoehner**
Excused absence: **Vice Chairman Carson Ross, Member Arvid West,**
and **Member Bernadette Miller**
- C. Introductions
Guests and staff present.
 - 1. Guest: **Col. Wayne Medley**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Alice Fairfax**; **Bill Rieger**, DAV; **David Shafer**, American Legion
 - 2. Staff: **Ronald Taylor**, Executive Director; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Hal Dulle**, Assistant Director; **Jess Rasmussen**, Director Higginsville Cemetery; **Tim Norton**, Director of Properties; **Anne Payne**, Superintendent of Homes; **Pat Rowe Kerr**, Veterans Benefits Awareness Representative; **Don Long**, Administrator, Mt. Vernon Veterans Homes
- D. Approval of June 17, 2004 Commission Meeting Minutes. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as recorded.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

Management Report: Executive Director Comments: Ronald Taylor

1) 2001 the Commission through the Memorial Grants Program approved the National Military Education Center and Museum, Lexington, Missouri grant. In early spring 2004 one of the major institutional supporters to the center was unable to provide the 2 million grant as promised. In view of the agreement the Missouri Veterans Commission and the National Military Education Center and Museum, Lexington, Missouri states that if the monies are not used for the

purpose in which the grant was intended it should be returned to the Commission. As a result 112 to 117 acres of land in the city of Lexington was deeded over to the Commission as payment for the grant. The appraisal value of the land in 2001 was 1.25 to 1.75 million dollars. The grant was in the amount of 1.5 million dollars. With the new highway and bridge erected near the property it causes the value to increase. After several meetings with Andy Scott and Jerry Brown from the Center, the land was deeded to the Commission and was recorded at the court house. There are currently no immediate plans for the land at this time. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions of a memorial or veteran related use of the land you may notify the Commission.

2) \$1 million E&E was appropriated this past session for videotaping of veterans. This fund creates the Veterans' Historical Education Trust Fund, to be administered by the Missouri Veterans Commission. A focus group committee has been formed consisting of two Senators, two Representatives and members from the commission and service organizations. The ideas present would be to composite DVD's and make available to schools districts for use at Veterans Day ceremonies and etc. teaching both children grade school and high school age more about veterans and what their contributions have been. Based upon the focus groups ideas they will be selecting three people with experience doing videos that will become our technical advisors and assist us to draw up a request for proposal along with OA the technical aspects of the project. The commission and service organizations will identify potential interviewees for the project and a consulting firm will be involved will conduct phone interviews and assist with the final selection and make the contact with the veteran. Representative Jackson, Chair Veterans Affairs Committee, who is the major force in getting the money for the project is pursuing the state of Missouri to provide space in the State Capitol Building for the videos to be viewable. Mr. Taylor stated that hopefully by early fall the technical group will have enough information they can go to OA. The committee has also met with DESE and other state agencies that have done videos to see if they could provide assistance and discuss their procedures for videotaping, copying and distributing to schools districts.

3) VCCITF budget projections for 2005 indicate a \$1 million negative ending cash balance. Ron Taylor and Tim Norton attended the VA hearing concerning the Warrensburg per diem issue, a decision has not been made however the judge did imply there has been some inconsistencies in VA's decision making in this area but that they had to go back to see if there is a legal basis for giving us the money. If the per diem is awarded to MVC there will add an additional \$906,000 to the VCCITF. If denied Mr. Taylor would like to recommend to the Commission to file an appeal with the Court of Appeals for Veterans. If money has not been awarded by fall this year we will be constantly revising our budget for the fiscal year. Other options we can look at: a) request supplemental appropriations rather than looking at cutbacks on our programs or, b) a larger than 10% resident fee increase January 1, (the rate would still be under

\$2,000 per month and will still be far below surrounding states who provide skilled care) rates and fees would still be based on ability to pay.

Commissioner Niewoehner expressed his concerns with the budget issue.

A letter was written per the Commissioners request at the June meeting to the Senate Pro-tem and the House Speaker requesting a joint committee be appointed to address these budget issues. Senator Kinder has replied that he will comply with our request and appoint members. No information has been received from the Speaker's office to date.

A report to the Missouri Veterans Commission on Preliminary requests for new funding was distributed to the Commissioners. Mr. Taylor stated the report outlines the challenges in resources which deal with both level of staffing and also the issue on competing with other healthcare entities. The Commission is looking into a number of ways to try to attract staff. Part of them relates to wage increases or ways to reposition some of the direct care staff but also an examining opportunity to look at other incentives such as a internship or developing a career path for CNA's or looking at the possibility of a bill recently introduced by the Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman that would set up an additional matching grant program for state agencies that operate veterans homes. If the states come up with 50% of the money to do either educational incentive or bonuses or changes of other kinds of continuing education the federal government would match 50% of the cost. The Commission is hoping if passes at the federal level we can tag into that and be able to present a draft to those committees we have asked to study the budget issues and outline our needs. According to the projection for 2006 & 2007 it will require 15 million dollars not including pay increases to meet MVC's needs. For FY06 there is no option to GR even if there was a statutory change to give us more money from somewhere else it would not reach us until the FY07 year. For FY06 if the state wants MVC to operate all of the beds at the homes with the needs we see right now it will take that amount of GR to continue. Mr. Taylor stated there are other approaches we could seriously take and try and manage in a sense deflate the acuity level of our residents. If we arbitrarily decide we will not take any more level threes at our homes and be careful to admit those that take the least resources to take care we can probably get by with less than our projection totals. We need to make clear to the Committees that if we do not get some of these things then we get caught in a cycle where we do not have enough staff, which produces overtime, which creates additional staff turnover and we would not be able to admit more residents that we currently have now. A consultant firm was hired and did an assessment on our efficiencies earlier this summer where they pointed out some areas where they seen opportunity for efficiencies. We do not want to affect the quality of care we provide so Mr. Taylor advised the Commissioners that we will request the 15 million dollars to meet our needs and the needs of our veterans. Anne Payne reinforced that three serious issues have been identified: 1) staffing issues to take care of the needs the veterans; 2) compete in the market place primarily the

healthcare market place where there is a federal shortage and its hard to project the exact need; 3) keeping up with our expense and equipment such as pharmaceutical, food, utilities and other expenses we require to support our operation.

Commissioner Niewoehner read an article published in the paper regarding the state focusing on returning home soldiers. Ron Taylor noted the high number of returning soldiers from Iraq suffering with lose of limbs and will require specialized training and other things, but we also need to focus on our own 1,050 veterans in our veterans homes. He also stated another item we need to focus on with legislators and others is the fact that the majority of veterans in our homes 65 to 70% if they are not in a veterans' nursing home have to be in a Medicaid bed. We can not identify if there is a tremendous amount of savings from the state in paying for it out of Medicaid. Some states several years ago tried making their beds Medicaid approved which caused problems and federal government refused to pay. We cannot receive the federal per diem and Medicaid both.

Mr. Taylor stated the Commission will request to get on the legislative tour again this year for the purpose of educating new freshman legislators.

Mr. Taylor informed the commissioners the Commission along with other agencies have made presentations to the Personnel Advisory Board who recommends to the Governor that they need to look at repositioning or critical class adjustments for RN's. Mental Health, Corrections and MVC have made recommendations to them that the current range for RN's does not go high enough and if they don't reposition them to a higher level that it becomes a fruitless effort. We hope to use the Joint Committee to address these issues.

Missouri Veterans Homes: Anne Payne, Superintendent of Homes

Homes Program – Anne Payne noted that over the course of the last fiscal year ending June 30th the homes paid out 1.1 million dollars in overtime and a bill was passed this year requiring paying overtime. According to the estimates the homes does not have the capacity to comply with that law within our current appropriations. A supplemental request would need to be submitted by November to meet this new state requirement.

Ron Taylor and Anne Payne attended the Homes Conference, and was informed that the National Homes Association hired a consultant to look at the way homes where reporting their per diem cost to the federal VA. This is critical information because VA uses to determine how much they pay in per diem. Their estimate nationwide homes are under reporting costs by 65 to 100 million dollars. Next year we will receive less than originally anticipated for this past year due to this under reporting issue. The Consultant will be sending out to all 117 homes a worksheet that they can use to identify more effectively of what costs they can claim. The biggest single items they mention that are under reported are depreciation of buildings on the states share and the failure to report fringe

benefits. If the homes that are under reporting can get on board we could receive an increase in per diem in the future.

Construction Update: Tim Norton, Director of Properties

Construction – (Hand out) Tim Norton reported to the Commission the Fort Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery soil borings have been completed. The final site survey includes 227 acres, some rock was found but will not cause problems. Parson Consultants are under contract to complete the required surveys by Ft. Leonard Wood in order to transfer the property. The final cost for the consultant is \$105,000 which also includes \$10,000 to D&C for RATF to issue the contract and oversee. The cemetery pre-application has been submitted to VA.

Mt. Vernon Veterans Home: There are still a few items remaining on the punch list the contractor has not completed. We are holding monies till complete of these punch list items.

St. Louis Dementia Wing: Phase II is currently being completed. The first two wings of phase II renovation are complete and the project should be completed by November.

Warrensburg and Cameron Veterans Homes: The chiller upgrade project is currently under construction with a contract completion date of January 10, 2005.

St. James Veterans Home: Bids were opened in July 15th for the dementia dining/activity room. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for August 12th, with a project completion date of January, 2005. Commissioner Niewoehner asked if additional space to home would require adding to coolant system. Tim Norton advised the new unit will have its own separate system.

Cape Girardeau Veterans Home: The HAVC project request was submitted to VA in July along with 35% design drawings and specifications. The project consist of upgrading the heating, air conditioning and ventilating system, replacing flooring, renovating and expanding the kitchen, and adding a solarium, dementia dining/activity room and painting resident room walls. Anticipate VA conditional approval being sent around mid September and the design completed and out for bid in January 2005.

St. Louis Veterans Home: Since the opening of the home in 1993 and the original roof has suffered hail damage. The funding is available to replace the roof and MVC anticipates conditional approval in September and going out for bid after the first of the year.

Springfield Veterans Cemetery: Columbarium wall planning project is underway. The current wall is almost full. The pre-application to VA has been completed and hoping to have to go out for bid this fall.

St. Louis Veterans Home: Bids for new entrance were opened in July 2004. A pre-bid meeting is scheduled for August 10th with a contract completion date of December 2004.

Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery: Funds left over from the original construction of the Bloomfield Veterans Cemetery will be used to upgrade the committal shelter floor and add approximately 75 feet additional section of street towards the Stars & Stripes Museum.

All the above listed projects have funds appropriated except the Ft. Leonard Wood Cemetery. Mr. Norton advised he has worked on the Capitol Improvements budget for 2006 & 2007, MVC is requesting \$1 million of state funds for Ft. Leonard Wood the remaining funds would be federal funding. The state funds would be for design and construction and other items that VA might not participate in. The total cost submitted to VA was \$9.8 million with \$1 million in state funds based on previous cemeteries, inflation and the increase cost of construction. Ron Taylor stated that between the homes and the four cemeteries we are approaching \$90 million in federal funds and \$30 to \$35 million in state funds received.

Tim Norton stated the legislature may question the budget for 2006 & 2007. The construction budget can always be cut, however if we wait till later the cost only increases. Is it advised that you should spend at least 3% every year to keep buildings up to standards. Mr. Taylor reported that in looking at our budget request for the next few years the money coming into our Trust Fund we have focused on keeping that to request the things we need for construction, maintenance and operation of the cemeteries and if there is no money left to be used in supplementing for the homes then the money needs to come from GR.

Service to Veterans Program: Sharon Keith, Director, Service to Veterans Program

Service to Veterans – Sharon Keith reported that the Service to Veterans Program is keeping busy. The Service to Veterans Program has 38 Service Officers located throughout the state to serve of 567,000 veterans in the state of Missouri.

The Service Officers have been involved in the Veterans Benefits Supermarkets. On July 24 at the Ste, Genevieve Supermarket there were 486 veterans registered and there were 10 Service Officers available. She reported it was a great Supermarket with many new booths. The next Supermarket is scheduled for September 11th in Clinton. Service Officers are attending the “Freedom Salute Ceremonies” for returning troops. West Plains and Springfield have held ceremonies so far and another ceremony is scheduled in Springfield for September.

Letters were mailed in July to veterans registered at the Vashon High School Supermarket in St. Louis. Thank you to all the volunteers in central office for sending out those letters. MVC has been receiving telephone calls in response to the letter and it has resulted in a couple of claims. Home visits have also resulted from this effort.

The Service Officers have also been busy participating at fairs (Ozark Empire, Montgomery County, Southeast Missouri, St. Joseph and the Missouri State Fair), 4th of July Celebrations, and presentations to American Legion posts. Missouri veterans are receiving \$549 million in benefits paid from VA. From July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 the Missouri Veterans Commission added 4,971 new clients, prepared 19,430 forms, 2,933 were comp/pension claims (an increase of 181 new comp/pension claims over the previous year.)

Ms. Keith stated the outreach activities with the Missouri Veterans Commission and the federal VA continue. Recently the VA has come out with a push to reach all Vietnam Veterans.

Interviews are being conducted this week for a Veteran Service Officer in Mt. Vernon. The current officer will be retiring. A total of 15 applicants had been received.

Cemeteries Update: Jess Rasmussen, Director Higginsville Cemetery

Cemetery Program – (Hand out) Jess Rasmussen reported a combined total of 2,604 burials have been performed at the four cemeteries and 9,553 pre-registrations completed.

Mr. Rasmussen reported that under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations expands the requirements for State Veterans Cemeteries for compliance with federal VA after cemetery project completion. Requirements include: 1) we must monitor and provide annual reporting of cemetery usage by sub-groups and minorities to include women veterans. 2) If a large non-English speaking group exists in our area that would reasonably be eligible for benefits we would be obligated to provide information in language other than English. Mr. Rasmussen indicated that he does not believe that there is a significant group of non-English speaking veterans in our service area that would require benefits information in another language. He also stated that the VBATF currently targets urban minority populations in Kansas City and St. Louis.

3) VA has established a rule to require inspection of State Veterans Cemeteries every third year. Mr. Rasmussen noted that he has spoken to Ms. Betsy Hearn at the National Cemetery Administration regarding the inspection process and she has indicated they would probably ask for assistance and input from the states to develop such a program.

December 2004 Memorial Services Network (which includes Missouri & Indianapolis) Conference is scheduled. Mr. Rasmussen is planning to attend and some other Cemetery Directors would like to attend.

Higginsville Cemetery set a record of 6 interments on Friday July 30th.

Ron Taylor advised the Commissioners that he has still not heard back from the Attorney Generals office concerning Swan Lake Cemetery in Kansas City, however apparently they have made some wording changes on their advertising. Commissioner Niewoehner had information from a company in St. Louis advertising veteran burials. Sharon Keith previously checked on this company and they refer you to VA Regional office 800-827-1000.

Ron Taylor informed the Commissioners due to rapidly increasing workload to the STV Program, MVC will be asking in next years budget about 6.8 FTE because of the success of the Supermarkets and other outreach activities in the cities we are unable to keep up. In addition, with the four operating cemeteries, a fifth in the planning stage, and VA's required inspections MVC is also asking for a Cemetery Superintendent position located in Jefferson City funded requested from the Trust Fund. For the Service Program the additional amount requesting is over \$200,000 in GR. He noted MVC is working on job description for the Minority Coordinator position. Hope to have in place so that by October we will be able to hire. MVC will be asking for a few extra positions in Central Office. With the growing size of the Homes Program, and other programs the demand has increased for some Central Office staff.

VSO Grants: Hal Dulle, Deputy Director

VSO Grant Program- Hal Dulle reported that out of \$750,000 allocated for the VSO Grants, \$652,094 was awarded in 2004. To date we have received requests for \$869,638. He noted MVC can grant what was spent last year to the Service Organizations and then MVC will create a priority list for the extra amount.

St. Louis County received additional funds late; they expended \$24,000 last year and asked for \$90,000 this year. With Commission approval MVC will award them \$88,594.

Ron Taylor noted that all the organizations or agencies that where applying for the grant basically the service officers were supported primarily by the state organization except for the DAV who has both department service officers and national service officers. It was agreed that DAV can only apply for matching grant based upon the department's service officer supported by the state but not for the national service officers. Based on information we received the Military Order of Purple Heart are supported by the National Service. It is unclear whether they are totally supported by national or supported by state. MVC will be looking into the funding.

Commissioner Fairfax announced the dedication of the Purple Heart Memorial will be held at the Veterans Cemetery in Springfield on Saturday, August 7th at 11:00 a.m. Ike Skelton will be the guest speaker at the event.

Hal Dulle continued on that the American Legion will be receiving \$104,731 and DAV will get \$190,102. VVA will receive \$61,863, St. Louis City \$65,000 and VFW will receive \$186,939. There is still roughly \$36,000 to \$37,000 to be awarded. The Supermarkets has created additional workload to the STV Program but also the Service Organizations workload. He noted MVC is hoping to entertain through the budget process an increase in the \$750,000 and also the 50/50 allocation. Service Organizations could assist the American Legion lobby for this increase.

Ron Taylor informed the Commissioners the grant program has been a successful partnership with VA, the Commission and the Service Organizations. The St. Louis Vashon High School Supermarket had a total of 23 service officers (5 from MVC) available to assist 1,682 registered veterans. Hal Dulle is working to try to coordinate a meeting later this month or in September with Service Organizations to talk about how MVC can become more effective and our current needs. Hal Dulle and Julie Miller will be looking at the allocation of these grants and determining how it will contribute to the overall outreach program making sure we cover several areas.

Veterans Benefits Awareness Program: Ron Taylor, Executive Director

VBATF – (Hand out) Ron Taylor reported there have been a total of 6,438 calls made to the toll free number. Of that 4,081 turned out to be good leads.

Benefits Supermarkets – 6,678 veterans have registered at Supermarkets and an estimated additional 30 to 100 veterans attended each event, but did not register.

We do not have the dollars figures yet for fiscal year end from VA. At the DAV Convention in May, Gary Williams reported that between April 2002 to April 2004 Missouri added more than 4,500 veterans receiving compensation. Mr. Taylor stated the VA in St. Louis has indicated they have seen a big jump since the St. Louis Supermarket in claims. And in some instances some of those claims have already been filed and approved from VA. Sharon Keith noted that the veterans claims generated from the St. Louis Vashon High School Supermarket can be identified. Ms. Keith will look at the recent claims and see if they are from the Supermarket and if so if VA has approved or not.

Ron Taylor noted a couple of other initiatives that have started to have some impact. Based upon a recent research project by the University of Missouri Media Class, students from the class arranged a special deal for the state to do advertising of the toll free number on bus backs in the St. Louis and Kansas City area and wind guards advertisements at bus stops near the VA hospitals. MVC

now has a few buses in those areas with the toll free number. John Burgess the Service Officer in Kansas City has been receiving calls from veterans who have seen the ad. Ron stated MVC will track that over the next few months to see how that pays off. Hal Dulle noted that this is the second year the Media class has taken on the Commissions outreach project as their communication campaign project to develop a media outreach plan. Ron Taylor stated the class also had another advertising idea of leaving little green army men in public areas (bus stops, park benches, restrooms, etc.). Small tags are affixed which have the toll free number and website on it.

Alison Young writer for Knight Ridder newspaper, attended the April supermarket in Jefferson City and did several interviews with veterans, went back and wrote a nationwide story that ran July 4 week in the Philadelphia Inquire, KC Star and over 400 papers that were able to access the article. This story has led to additional attention and she has indicated she will be running other articles that will be follow ups to her story. Pat Rowe Kerr stated that if anyone has copies of the articles to forward copies to the Commission so that we can develop a relationship with the papers that seem to have an interest in what we are doing.

In reference to MVC's nationwide coverage, Mr. Taylor informed the Commissioners that Stan Baughn, Director Veterans Benefits Awareness has received a request for detailed information on our Supermarket Model from the State of North Carolina. Their request asks how we developed our outreach program and how to conduct Supermarkets.

Outreach: Pat Rowe Kerr, Veterans Benefits Awareness Representative

Pat Kerr stated that she is working with the National Guard to reach returning veterans. She will be raising funds for the Foundation that can be used for our veterans. These dollars will also help to compensate where the VA and DOD can't pay. Expenses for injured military with a need can also contact National Corporations for money. If anyone knows individuals in your community that might have a need, have them contact the Commission and MVC will work with those families to get funds. There are a total of 27 service personnel from Missouri who have lost their lives during this war.

Ms. Kerr reported that she is involved in the Veterans History project.

August 13th a Support the Troops event will take place on the South lawn of the Capitol Building. The Missouri Veterans Commission will participate at the event.

September 17th the 3rd Annual "Chipping in Veterans" Golf Tournament will be held at Tanglewood in Fulton.

Saturday, October 23rd Trekking for the Troops; a walk, run or bike ride event that will be held on the Katy Trail and will raise funds for the Foundation. This event will also take place on "Make a Difference Day". Prizes will be awarded.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Don Long, Administrator Mt. Vernon Home reported that June 14 they started moving residents into the new facility. They took 3 days to move one section at a time. All 95 residents were moved without any incidents. They then took a couple of weeks to let the residents get settled in before admitting their first new resident on June 30 and added 10 more during the month of July. Staffing is covered at this time. He also reported the veterans and their families are happy with the new facility. Mr. Long stated he is anxious to see the QI report for this month.

Dave Schafer, American Legion spoke to the Commissioners regarding the American Legacy Scholarships Program provided through the American Legion. These are scholarships for children of deceased service personnel due to the September 11th situation. One child has received a scholarship so far. The amount of scholarship depends on the funds available and they are renewable scholarships each year.

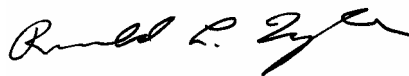
Col. Wayne Medley, Director Missouri Military Funeral Honors Program reported they have completed their 5th year in service and as of this time they have serviced over 35,200 veterans in the state. They are averaging approximately 700 services per month. 319,000 miles were traveled last year attending services.

Bill Rieger, DAV Service Officer located in Mt. Vernon has reported seeing an increase in new claims each month of 20-25%.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Fairfax announced the next Commission meeting will be held on Monday, September 20 at 9:00 a.m. at Missouri State Veterans Cemetery Bloomfield.

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.



Ronald L. Taylor, Secretary